



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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International Group to Donate Guitar To MCTC Volunteer Activities Coordinator

Barbara Allen hopes to establish music programs to reduce idle time and violence

TOWSON, MD (December 14, 2007)---Maryland Correctional Training Center Volunteer Activities Coordinator Barbara Allen will travel to the nation's capital today to accept a guitar for inmates from an international group dedicated to setting up arts and music programs in prisons.

Barbara Allen's intention is to establish inmate bands of various musical backgrounds at the Hagerstown-area facility, with the long-term goal of providing music lessons to inmates. She'll get a start today, when she accepts a \$300 Alvarez acoustic guitar from *Jail Guitar Doors*, a group founded by British musician Billy Bragg that is making its first foray into American prisons. MCTC will be one of the first American prisons to receive such a gift.

Bragg, a singer-songwriter, began his crusade by asking British musicians to donate money through benefit performances in order to purchase guitars for prisons overseas. This fall, the effort expanded to include American prisons, through the Prisons Foundation, which maintains that "a guitar in a prisoner's hands can...help to heal."

Ms. Allen, who coordinates all volunteer activities at Maryland's second-largest prison (2,900 inmates), constantly looks for ways to involve inmates in activities and programs that will reduce idle time, teach a skill, or provide education, without using taxpayer money. The goal is to involve inmates in meaningful pursuits to reduce the likelihood that once out in society (which 98% of all inmates will be one day), they will be less likely to commit new crimes.

Music is one of Ms. Allen's passions. When she heard about the potential guitar donation, the Volunteer Activities Coordinator contacted Jail Guitar Doors, and ultimately became one of the first American prison representatives selected to receive one.

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